



REENTRY PROGRAMS

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Background

Inmates Released from SCDC

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The South Carolina Department of Corrections (SCDC) houses more than 23,000 inmates at any given time in its 29 prisons. From 2000 to 2004, SCDC's institutional count increased by about 2,000 inmates. As of June 2004:

33% of the population was ineligible for parole and required to serve 85% of their sentence under Truth-in-Sentencing;

48% of the population were violent offenders;

10% of the population were mentally ill;

half of the population had medical problems (51%);

half could not read at the 9th grade level (53%); and

nearly half were diagnosed as chemically dependent (44%) with a significantly higher percentage of inmates having a history of substance abuse problems.

In FY 2004, approximately 13,500 inmates were released to the community. This number is about 21% higher than in FY 2000, resulting in a greater need for reentry programs and more extensive screening requirements, such as DNA testing, Hepatitis and TB screening, victim-witness notifications and sex offender registry.

The overall recidivism rate for inmates released from SCDC is 32%; however, young offenders between the ages of 17 and 35 return at a significantly higher rate than older inmates and the inmates 25 or younger return at double the rate of those over 40 years old.

Reentry programs reduce the likelihood of reincarceration by providing services and supervision for a successful transition to the community.

Offender Employment Preparation Program

In 2001, the **Offender Employment Preparation Program** was proposed by the SC legislature to aid incarcerated individuals with reentry into their home communities of this state. The South Carolina Department of Corrections was directed by the legislature to be the coordinating agency to assist inmates prepare for meaningful employment upon release from confinement. These efforts are coordinated with the Employment Security Commission; Department of Probation, Parole and Pardon Services; the Department of Vocational Rehabilitation; Alston Wilkes Society; and other private sector entities.

Going Home Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Program (SVORI)

A Program to Assist Inmates Plan and Prepare for Release from the South Carolina Department of Corrections

In 2002, the SC Department of Corrections was awarded a grant for the **Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative (SVORI)**. The grant program is primarily for violent or high-risk inmates ages 17 to 35 that have a requirement for community supervision in South Carolina following a period of incarceration. Inmates normally participate in the program for 12 months prior to release.

Institutionally Based Programs. Through the **Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative (SVORI)** grant, the South Carolina Department of Corrections has expanded transition services across the state at seven facilities. One site is focuses on sex offenders and another site offers a gender-specific reentry program for women offenders.

SVORI Program Locations

- Kershaw Correctional Institution
- Leath Correctional Institution (women offenders)
- Lee Correctional Institution
- MacDougall Correctional Institution
- Ridgeland Correctional Institution
- Tyger River Correctional Institution (sex offenders)
- Wateree River Correctional Institution

A Transition Coordinator is located at each of the sites to provide reentry services. A reentry plan is developed and the transition coordinator and classification case manager work together to assist the participants in meeting their needs. Each offender has a Transition Team, which includes a transition coordinator, a representative from SCDPPPS, a classification caseworker, other appropriate institutional staff, the offender, and where appropriate, the offender's family.

In 2003 and 2004, SCDC was awarded a supplemental grants to provide substance abuse and mental health services for sex offenders in the community and additional funds for training.

The components of the institutional phase of the reentry program include:

- Orientation
- An individualized reentry plan developed by the Coordinator with the Transition Team.
- A standard curriculum augmented with services or programs targeting individualized needs.
- Emphasis on employment services coordinated with the Employment Security Commission and local One-Stop Centers and vocational rehabilitation services coordinated through the Vocational Rehabilitation Department.
- Specific targeted institutional services provided as needed, such as substance abuse treatment, employment skills/vocational training, education, housing assistance, life skills training, faith-based services, mentoring, cognitive thinking programs, job placement, and specific programming for females and sex offenders.
- Supervision agent meeting with the participant prior to release to discuss reentry plans.
- Information packet provided to the participants before they leave prison containing necessary legal and identification documents, post-release appointments and contacts, and community resources.
- Community reentry resources developed statewide and in the specific areas of the state near the transition sites accessible through a Web-based resource provider database.

Interagency Partnerships

Community-based long term support is being developed as a collaborative effort between the SC Department of Corrections; Department of Probation, Parole and Pardon Services; the legislature and other local, state and federal agencies.

In 2004, agency heads joined SCDC in a statewide effort to plan and coordinate services for offenders returning to the community. The SC Reentry Collaborative Team was established with policy-level representatives from 12 agencies. State agency representatives participated in a three-day training program, *"Enhancing the Effectiveness of Collaborative Teams,"* conducted in May 2003 in Alexandria, VA by the Center for Effective Public Policy and the US Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs. Since returning from the training, the members of the collaborative team have continued to work together on issues such as employment, treatment, housing, education, identification cards and the development of a comprehensive release plan model, a reentry system map, and a shared database.

The SC Reentry Collaborative Team includes:

- Department of Corrections
- Department of Probation, Parole and Pardon Services
- Department of Public Safety, Office of Justice Programs
- Department of Health and Human Services
- Department of Mental Health
- Department of Education
- Department of Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Services
- Department of Vocational Rehabilitation
- Department of Social Services
- Employment Security Commission
- Alston Wilkes Society

National Evaluation

South Carolina has been selected for the national multi-site evaluation of the Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative (SVORI). Research teams from RTI International and the Urban Institute are currently conducting the evaluation to determine whether the selected programs have accomplished the overall goal of increasing public safety by reducing recidivism among the offenders served by these programs.

For additional information, contact the Project Director:
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Pre-Release, Work Release, and Labor Crew Programs

Pre-release centers (Level 1A) in the SC Department of Corrections house minimum-security non-violent inmates who are within 36 months of release. These facilities are work and program oriented, providing intensive specialized programs that prepare the inmates for release to the community. Inmates are eligible for work release when they have three years or less remaining on their sentence or "max out" date. To be eligible, the inmates cannot be convicted of a violent or sex offense, have disciplinary problems or a record of escape. Inmates at Level 1A facilities initially work on inmate labor crews that provide services to various state agencies and are later placed in jobs in the community by Community Programs Supervisors. Level 1-B minimum-security facilities house inmates with relatively short sentences or time to serve.

Inmates in the work release program, earn the prevailing wage for their employment in the community. Costs for their institutional room and board, victims' programs, family support, court imposed fees and state and federal taxes are withheld from their earnings.

30-Day Pre-Release Program

A 30-day pre-release program is located at Watkins Pre-Release Center. Eligible inmates are transferred to Watkins 30 days prior to release. The Center provides an environment conducive to rehabilitation through work programming, pre-release programming/training, and other life skills programs as a means of reintegrating the offender into the community. Literacy and GED preparation is provided with the 30-day program. Other services include religious services, volunteer services, vocational rehabilitation, vocational placement, housing and employment assistance, aftercare referral, Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous programs.

Short Term Offender Program

The **Short Term Offender Program (STOP)** located at Broad River Correctional Institution in Columbia is for male inmates entering the Department of Corrections with sentences of one year or less. This program opened October 13, 2003.

This fast paced pre-release program is designed to address the needs of offenders that have shorter sentences.

Educational opportunities for the Short Term Offender Program are being developed through a grant with a local school district and through a new and cost-effective satellite Corrections Learning Network. The SC Vocational Rehabilitation Department is providing vocational services for inmates who are eligible to receive services following release.

The basic program is expediting core services for work and transition planning to inmates who have less than three months to serve in SCDC. A longer concentrated work, education and transition program is being developed for inmates who have more than three months to serve in SCDC.

Educational and Vocational Training Programs

The Palmetto Unified School District in SCDC offers adult academic education and GED programs in a number of institutions across the state. In addition, satellite educational programs that prepare inmates for release are offered through the Corrections Learning Network. Vocational training is also provided in such courses as CAD, construction trades that include carpentry, brick masonry, residential and commercial electrical and HVAC. These courses provide inmates with excellent job training skills that prepare them to join the work force and are invaluable to them upon release back into society.

In 2003, SCDC was forced to implement a reduction-in-force that resulted in a fifty percent cut in the number of courses offered. On the recommendation and approval of Director Ozmint, the Division of Education has reopened twelve vocational programs. Part-time instructors provide thirty hours of instruction per week to inmate students. Additional positions have been filled with full-time instructors who are certified correctional officers. SCDC hopes to add more vocational programs in the near future.

Self-Paced In-Class Education Program (SPICE)

SCDC's Self-Paced In-Class Education (SPICE) Program is a collaborative effort with Probation, Parole, and Pardon Services, SCDC, and Greenville Technical College. This initiative provides meaningful educational opportunities (vocational training and GED opportunities), life skill training, and spiritual awareness. Inmates who successfully complete this program may be viewed favorably by the Parole Board for early release.

Institutional Component

The SPICE program consists of two components--an institutional component and a community-based component. Inmates are required to participate in a minimum of 800 training hours in social/life skills, vocational, health education and wellness training, and religious education. The participant must acknowledge that this is a voluntary program and agree to the mandatory participation from the approved family member and a local church mentor prior to enrolling in the community-based program at Greenville Technical College. The average length of the institutional program is 60 days, 10 hours a day, five days a week.

Future plans for the institutional component of this program include utilizing the Corrections Learning Network to assist in the life skills and some vocational training. The CLN satellite educational program has been effective in enhancing the quality and quantity of educational opportunities to the inmates in the SC Department of Corrections. In the final phase of the program, SCDC will work with and through various prison ministries to develop reentry housing for the offender.

Community Component

The community component occurs for approximately three months following parole and involves the following: attending Greenville Tech College for vocational/educational training for 30 days. SPICE participants work and are involved in vocational training or a GED initiative for 5-8 hours per day and attend spiritual event (church) at least twice per week for the full three months. Participants are assigned mentors from the participating church groups. Offenders who choose not to participate in spiritual events may opt to participate in a public works program.

Prison Industries Programs

Prison Industry Programs are available in a number of institutions in the SC Department of Corrections. The Division of Industries serves the Department of Corrections and the state of South Carolina by employing and training inmates. This training oriented work allows the inmates to return to society with skills that will enable them to become useful and productive citizens. In pursuit of this objective, the cost of incarceration is offset through inmate wages and quality products and services are provided to qualified businesses and organizations at substantial savings.

Three programs operate within Prison Industries: Traditional, Service and Prison Industry Enterprise (PIE). Inmates working in the Traditional Program manufacture products such as desks, credenzas, bookcases, seating and office modular systems. These items are sold to state, county and municipal offices and school districts. Inmates working in this program may receive a wage of up to \$.35 per hour.

In the Service Program inmates rebuild/reupholster furniture for both public and private sector customers. Additionally, PI packages gloves, plastic cutlery, Christmas balls, tennis balls and attaches UPC labels to plumbing parts. Service work is not product manufacturing. Inmate wages can be negotiated with private sector companies since it does not fall under Federal Minimum Wage requirements. Inmates earn from \$.35 to \$.85 per hour.

In the PIE Program strict guidelines must be followed which require that inmates voluntarily work in the program and acknowledge that taxes, victim compensation and room and board will be deducted from their gross pay. Inmates in this program are paid the prevailing wage of the local area for the particular jobs they perform. Also, PI cannot displace currently employed workers in the community. Since this work is manufacturing and goods are placed in interstate commerce, the PIE guidelines must be followed. Hardwood flooring, apparel, computer wire harnesses, furniture and faucet handles are being produced. Pay ranges from \$5.50 to \$6.50 per hour.

Currently 2,169 inmates are working in Prison Industries generating over \$22.5 million annually. The Prison Industries Program is completely self-supporting, providing valuable training for the inmates while generating funding for the Agency.

Veterans Programs

The South Carolina Department of Corrections currently houses about 1,500 inmates who report that they have served in the military. Services offered through the Veterans Administration help these individuals establish productive lives in the community.

The South Carolina Department of Corrections identifies offenders who are veterans so that the Veterans Administration Medical Center can provide assistance to inmates prior to release. Veterans Administration representatives come into SCDC institutions to evaluate incarcerated individuals and offer additional services after their release from prison.

Alston Wilkes Society

Nine regional Community Service Coordinators serve all 46 counties in the state, providing case management, counseling and employment services to offenders, former offenders, homeless people, troubled youth and the families of these populations. AWS helps clients make a successful transition back into society through housing assistance, employment training/placement, transportation, food, clothing and referrals to other community resources.

The Veterans Home is a working alternative for homeless male veterans. This residential home in Columbia gives these veterans a two-year alternative to living on the streets while Alston Wilkes helps them to find employment and permanent housing.

Project Take HEART is offered in partnership with the National Home Builders Institute. This 12-week program for homeless men and women develops skills to succeed through academic education and training in building and apartment maintenance and residential construction. Recently, the Columbia Homebuilders Association awarded a grant to Project Take HEART to help in the construction of bunk beds at the Cooperative Ministry shelter.

Faith Based Programs and Volunteer Support

The SC Department of Corrections receives support from faith-based organizations, as well as other community organizations and volunteers. Institutional Chaplains serve as volunteer coordinators to develop resources that can assist inmates prepare for release and provide assistance when they return to the community.

COMMUNITY BASED TRANSITION PROGRAMS

Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative (SVORI)

The South Carolina Department of Probation, Parole and Pardon Services provides an array of community based programs. The community based phase of the ***Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative*** is designed to reduce the rate of return to prison. Participants are required to contact SCDPPPS within 24 hours of their release to the community to continue the reentry program and receive specific targeted

services, as needed, in such areas as substance abuse treatment, employment skills/vocational training, education, housing assistance, transportation, mentoring and faith-based services.

A Partnership for Change

A Partnership for Change is another reentry initiative through the SC Department of Probation, Parole and Pardon Services (SCDPPPS) to facilitate the reentry of inmates from prison into the community. Parole agents, along with potential employers, visit state institutions quarterly to meet with soon-to-be released prisoners returning to Richland County to formulate aftercare plans. Emphasis is on inmates who are “maxing out” their sentences since they face no post-release supervision and have a greater likelihood of recidivism. Funding has been reduced for this project so volunteers now provide much of the staff resources. Volunteers from the Educational Opportunity Center of the University of South Carolina work on site at the Richland County Parole Office. Cases are monitored for 90 days.

Parole Employment Program (PEP)

Through an agreement with the South Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation Department (SCVRD), the Department of Probation, Parole and Pardon Services has established a statewide employment skill development and assisted job placement program to assist offenders with meeting the “suitable employment” requirement which is a statutory condition precedent for release to parole supervision. The SCDPPPS is promoting a collaborative working relationship with SCVRD and SCDC to successfully operate this Parole Employment Program (PEP).

On the day of the parole hearing, if the inmate still has no employment plan but meets the PEP eligibility criteria, the Parole Examiner/Agent can refer the inmate to the PEP. A Request for and Consent to Release Information from Offender's Records must be signed by the inmate on the day of the parole hearing to be conditionally paroled and referred to the PEP.

An SCVRD Counselor will go to the institution to meet with the inmate within 15 working days of receiving the referral from the Department. If the Counselor determines that the inmate is appropriate for SCVRD services, the Counselor will schedule an appointment in SCVRD's county office in the inmate's resident county. SCVRD will notify the Office of Conditional Release of the determination and the appointment after the institutional meeting. If the inmate is appropriate for SCVRD services, the Office of Conditional Release will prepare the parole certificate.